

Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, hundreds of Minnesotans, as well as citizens from across the country, have contacted my office about the military's multi-million dollar taxpayer sponsorship of NASCAR race cars. Frankly, many of my constituents and citizens of all political persuasions - Democrats, Republicans, and Tea Party activists - are dumbfounded when race car drivers receive millions of dollars from the Department of Defense while the Speaker of the House of Representatives tells the American people our country is "broke."

Last month the House of Representatives voted to eliminate funding for homeless veterans, slash community health centers serving low income families, and pass a fiscal year 2011 budget that would force 800,000 Americans to lose their jobs. Yet, taxpayer funded sponsorship of NASCAR racing teams was protected. I find this absurd.

One of my constituents, a twelve-year-old young man named Nickolas of South Saint Paul, Minnesota, provided an eloquent rebuttal to these appalling priorities. Nickolas wrote my office saying:

*Congresswomen Betty McCollum,*

*My name is Nickolas, and I am a Boy Scout working on my Citizenship in the Nation Merit Badge.*

*I read online that you wrote a bill to stop the Pentagon from sponsoring NASCAR race teams as a way to advertise. I agree that it is absurd that the Pentagon is funding NASCAR. We should put the money into NASA and jobs for people. NASA is more important than NASCAR.*

*If the government is going to pay to support a race, how about a race to Mars? America has already sent people to the moon, why not Mars? Instead of paying for people to go in circles, why not pay for people to go for Mars? Humans are explorers. We should go to answer questions about the Red Planet and the Solar System. In addition, the studies done to get to Mars will give us better technology here on earth.*

Nickolas understands that scarce taxpayer dollars need to be invested in innovation, education, and exploration that will create new opportunities to expand our knowledge of space and our economy. I strongly encourage my colleagues to take Nickolas' advice and focus on cutting

unnecessary government spending, like government sponsorship of NASCAR race cars while making sound investments in America's future.